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DEPARTMENT FOR G, DRL/SEA, AND NSC/DEMOC

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: GREECE'S INPUT FOR PRESIDENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS
ROUNDTABLE AT UNGA

REF: STATE 125456

SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

1. (SBU) Defense and promotion of human rights and of those engaged in the cause of advancing human rights is one of our top Mission Strategic Goals. Embassy Athens regularly engages with defenders of freedom, meeting with NGO leaders in local clinics, shelters, and day care centers; attending criminal trials in support of TIP victims and anti-TIP NGOs; making an annual human rights visit to Thrace and meeting there with a wide range of human rights NGOs; meeting with minority religious leaders and regularly including human rights NGO leaders and community activists in official visits from Washington policy makers. Embassy Public Diplomacy efforts to promote human rights awareness recently included a two-day seminar organized by CG Thessaloniki; special roll-outs for the annual Human Rights and TIP reports; electronic distribution of human rights-related materials; the placement of op-eds in Greek media and development of a youth-oriented webpage featuring articles on human rights/democracy issues. Guest speakers at or sponsored by the Embassy regularly address human rights matters, as does the American Studies Seminar (now in its thirteenth year). Over the past seven years, more than ten IVs have been sent on human rights related programs. For the past six years a concerted effort to raise awareness regarding Holocaust issues and anti-Semitism has been a central part of our Public Diplomacy campaign. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

SUPPORTING DEFENDERS OF FREEDOM

2. (SBU) Specific ways in which Embassies have supported the defenders of freedom include:

- The Ambassador, DCM and other Embassy officials regularly meet with Greek central and local officials to advocate in support of issues raised by human rights NGOs, human rights activists, and community leaders.
- We frequently meet with Human rights NGO leaders and human rights activists in their offices, clinics or shelters, as well as with the clientele that they serve and/or represent.
- Embassies meet with a range of different religious leaders with particular focus on those outside of Greece's mainstream Orthodox religion and investigate allegations of discrimination.
- Human rights NGO leaders and other human rights activists are often nominated and selected as Embassy IV candidates.
- Human rights NGO leaders and other human rights activists

are routinely included in meetings with Washington visitors, on such topics as Trafficking in Persons (TIP) or Guantanamo Detainee issues.

-- Human rights NGO leaders and other human rights activists are invited to our annual Fourth of July celebration, to our annual Iftar during Ramadan, and to many other Embassy functions.

-- Emboffs have visited alien detention centers in Greece with NGO representatives and human rights activists.

-- Emboffs have visited Roma camps with human rights NGOs, human rights activists, and community leaders, on several occasions. In addition, the Embassy conducted a clothing and toothbrush drive within the Embassy community for Roma in coordination with two different NGOs and community leaders.

-- Emboffs regularly attend meetings and seminars sponsored by NGOs and activists to demonstrate U.S. engagement.

-- Emboffs attended a criminal trial while an NGO-supported victim of trafficking was testifying.

-- Emboffs visited a day care center for Muslim children maintained by an NGO.

Emboffs make an annual hun riregion of Thrace in an effort to maintain close contacts with NGOs, activists and community leaders there. This is in addition to on-going contacts by ConGen Thessaloniki throughout the year.

-- Emboffs regularly meet with journalists to discuss Human

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Rights issues at length.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

13. (U) Through media outreach, speaker programming, exchanges, websites, and provision of information to selected contacts, Embassy works to raise Greek public and governmental consciousness on human rights/democracy issues and to support specific U.S. policy initiatives. Some specific examples include:

-- The Consulate General in Thessaloniki organized a two-day seminar on trans-border law enforcement cooperation with a special focus on combating TIP, illegal alien smuggling and narcotics trafficking. Experts from Homeland Security, FBI, DEA, along with other agencies, provided training to approximately 120 police, prosecutors and customs officers from Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Albania, Macedonia, Romania and Moldova.

-- Every year, the Embassy press Section organizes separate press roll-outs for the annual TIP and Human Rights reports, and provides electronic distribution of these materials.

-- Press placed op-eds in the Greek media on human rights-related topics including on the Sudan crisis; diplomacy of deeds (about U.S. support for Palestinians, Lebanon, AIDS and global disease); and on the anniversaries of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, both of which focused on the preservation of life and support for human rights,

-- The Embassy's official website and our youth-oriented website Mosaiko featured articles on human rights/democracy-type issues (multiculturalism, volunteerism, working with the Rom, etc.) and on the NATO tour for students which focuses on NATO and support for democracy.

-- Each year, the Press Section organizes at least one NATO tour for students and/or key contacts.

-- Grants through the Public Diplomacy Section have also been useful in supporting the defenders of freedom. In September 2006, The UNHCR-affiliated Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) received an \$8,000 ECA grant to fund an IV follow up program in Athens. With Embassy assistance, GCR arranged a roundtable discussion with high-ranking Greek policy makers to identify systemic weaknesses in the reception and resettlement of unaccompanied refugee minors in Greece and to shape proposals for improved practices. Joining the group was Kenneth Tota, Chief of Operations of the State Department's Office of Refugee Resettlement, who also traveled to Thessaloniki to address a similar group of Greek officials at a program co-organized by the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe.

GUEST SPEAKERS

¶4. (U) In 2007, our Speakers Program has featured many human rights-related guests, including:

-Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy met with students and key contacts in Athens to discuss the rule of law as a cornerstone of democracy.

-Special Envoy to the Sudan Andrew Natsios who spoke before a large audience on the humanitarian crisis in the Sudan.

-Two separate speakers for Marshall Plan anniversary programs spoke on the Marshall Plan's support for democracy and human rights.

-Department Legal Advisor John Bellinger spoke to Greek officials, NGO activists, and legal community representatives on the legal and human rights aspects of the war on terrorism.

-Journalism program: post organized a speaker program focusing on journalism schools which highlighted the importance of a free, ethical, and professional media as a pillar of democracy.

AMERICAN STUDIES SEMINAR

¶5. (U) American Studies Seminar: for the past 13 years, post has organized a two-week American studies seminar (one week in Thessaloniki) which provides an interdisciplinary history

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lesson on the U.S., emphasizing its democratic institutions and their development. Similarly, over the past seven years, the Embassy's IV Selection Committee has allocated 11 IV grants to academics, government and NGO representatives to attend human right-related IV projects with special emphasis on TIP. These projects have served to raise awareness of TIP issues among opinion and policy makers.

HOLOCAUST AWARENESS

¶6. (U) Over the past six years, the Embassy Athens has been instrumental in raising awareness regarding Holocaust education and anti-Semitism as part of our public diplomacy effort to advance and defend human rights. Our support includes grants in 2004 and 2005 to the Jewish Museum of Greece to partially cover costs of the museum's first and second conference for educators on "Teaching the Holocaust in Greece." Additionally, post worked closely with Greece to encourage its membership in the International Task Force on Holocaust Education (Greece became a member in full standing last year) and the meeting of obligations that Task Force membership implies. Post has also facilitated periodic consultations by representatives from the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. and the Department's Office of Holocaust Issues.

ELECTRONIC OUTREACH

¶7. (U) Finally, the Embassy's Information Resource Center (IRC) regularly sends human rights-related materials to key contacts. In 2006/2007, this included:

-Fact sheet on "Human Smuggling vs. Trafficking" to 35 media contacts (May 2006).

-Invitations for web chats focusing on combating violence against women and the media's role in fighting corruption and human rights abuses.

-TIP 2007 report (sections referring to Greece and the Balkans) sent to 780 PD contacts (press, NGOs, academics, and government).

-Statement on "U.S. Prohibits All Torture: 103 Troops Court-Martialed for Abuse" - Official report on U.S. position to U.N Committee Against Torture sent to 55 media contacts (May 2006).

-2006 Report on International Religious Freedom sent to 20 media contacts (religious issues reporters).

COUNTRYMAN